

News Connection

A monthly newsletter for DSHS staff and friends

This clothing store gives job applicants confidence

The saying goes “Clothes make the man or woman.”

In Port Townsend, low-income unemployed women scheduled for job interviews are given an extra advantage. Through the local Skookum Working Image non-profit organization, they are clothed from head to toe in interview- and job-appropriate outfits.

For one woman, “The clothes I got from here helped me get my job.” Once a woman secures a job, she may return for a second outfit.

“We try to help them select clothes that extend their wardrobe with simple changes of blouses or scarves,” said Ruth Merryman, co-founder of Working Image and social worker with the Port Townsend Community Services Office.

Her partner in this endeavor is Anne Schneider, retired and active in the Port Townsend community, who heard about a similar program back east. They approached Skookum Corporation requesting to be brought under their private, not-for-profit umbrella. Skookum, a company dedicated to employing at-risk individuals, enthusiastically agreed.

“This project is truly a community effort,” said Merryman. Skookum provides a room in their corporate headquarters and Ellen Piskula, Skookum program manager, administers the contract for the program. Boeing retirees built the racks and dressing room and painted walls. Local shops donated clothing racks. And women donate quality clothing from such companies as Jones

of New York, Calvin Klein, Elizabeth (Liz Claiborne’s large size clothing) in everything from size petite to 3X. Volunteers run the boutique.

Working Image has an advisory committee of nine members that provide guidance. “One of our members did the hiring at the community hospital prior to retirement,” said Merryman. “She



(From left) Ruth Merryman, a client now dressed for the workplace, Anne Schneider, and Ellen Piskula.

gives us tips on what employers look for in job candidates.”

Clients are referred to Working Image from local social service agencies, including WorkFirst, Domestic Violence, DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Peninsula College, and Community Action.

“Our goal is to have each client walk away from Working Image with as complete an outfit as we can, with confidence they are dressed appropriately for their interview and the job,” said Merryman.

One client, who was successful in her job interview, said, “These two ladies (her personal shoppers) took such personal concern for me and made me feel so special, like an ugly duckling (turning) into a swan...I’ve felt so disappointed in my personal appearance and they just made me feel alive and attractive again.”

For more information on Working Image, contact Ellen Piskula at (360) 385-4980 x- 107, 1-800-255-9526.

Gift of compassion can come in a duffel bag

Sometimes when children move into foster homes, they come with almost nothing and have no bags for what few items they do have. They must use a large trash bag. When Tim Hammond (at right), a child support enforcement officer with Vancouver Division of Child Support, learned this he thought, “we can send a better message to these kids who already have low self esteem that they and their belongings are worth more than a garbage bag.” He sent out requests to co-workers for contributions and recently presented 51 duffel bags, 156 stuffed animals, and 55 toys to the Vancouver Office of the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Donations came from not only his office, but also from the Orchards and White Salmon Community Services Offices, the Employment Security Vancouver Office and the Clark County Prosecutor’s Office. The stuffed animals will be given out during the year by the Vancouver DCFS staff to children being placed in foster care. “There’s not a child who comes in for placement who goes out the door without a stuffed animal, whether they’re two or 17,” said Peggy Hays, community resource program manager. “And every one of them clings to that comfort.”



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Recognize your colleagues’ outstanding work

It’s that time again when all DSHS employees can participate in showing their appreciation of those workers who are truly “Making a Difference” by nominating them for an Outstanding Employee Award.

During 1999, DSHS employees have made major contributions toward achieving the department’s mission. Several DSHS employees have excelled in their areas of work and expertise. Their contributions have made a difference in the lives of individuals and families in need, and have helped improve the way we work together.

Employees will be considered for awards in three categories: Outstanding Employee, Outstanding Team, and Vision Awards.

The Team Award focuses on groups of employees who accomplish extraordinary results. The Vision Award, presented at the regional and state levels, recognizes outstanding individual contributions towards diverse communities and work environments.

Staff recognized for state level awards are honored at the regional celebrations.

Nomination forms (available from office managers) and any supporting documentation must be submitted to local selection committees by Jan. 31.

For assistance in preparing a nomination, contact your local selection committee or the Director’s Office, Employee Services Division (360) 664-5863.

The News Connection

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Words about our work

Employees, clients, and the public share thoughts on the work we do

Send your thoughts and/or letters from clients to Secretary Lyle Quasim, attention: Letters to The News Connection, P.O. Box (Mailstop) 45010, Olympia WA 98504; via e-mail Quasil@dshs.wa.gov



Over the last year, the assistant secretaries and I have been studying ways this department can be streamlined, ways we can improve services to our clients in the face of constantly shifting revenues and needs.

At the same time, many of you have been working individually and as members of quality teams finding efficient and innovative ways to serve the people of this state. In fact, since the beginning of the formal Quality Improvement initiative, DSHS has achieved approximately \$30 million in cost savings.

With the recent passage of Initiative 695, our streamlining and quality improvement efforts become even more important.

As I shared with you in letters e-mailed to all staff on Nov. 24 and Dec. 16 (see page 5 for a copy of these letters), the Governor has requested we and other state executive agencies take several approaches to the I-695 budget shortfall.

He has called for increased use of technology and an increased emphasis on detecting and eliminating fraud. He has also directed a reduction of 1,500 full-time positions from all state agencies combined.

Throughout my years as Secretary of this department I have constantly been reminded of your dedication to the welfare of our clients and your accomplished skills at providing high quality services. I want to emphasize that the Governor's request is not due to the quality of your performances, but simply the budget shortfall.

The assistant secretaries and I are committed to ensuring this department absorbs its share of the staff reductions (500 FTEs) in the least painful manner possible. We will attempt to achieve much of the required reduction through early retirement, attrition, delays in filling some vacancies, reducing some temporary staff, and voluntary demotions or transfers to other positions.

However, because of forecast projections and declining populations in our juvenile rehabilitation institutions, we've made the difficult decision to phase-out Indian Ridge Youth Camp by April 2000. Additionally, two cottages for people with developmental disabilities at Lakeland Village and two cottages at Fircrest will be closed and residents will be moved into those cottages that are not full. These consolidations will mean a total reduction of 154 full-time staff positions by the end of the biennium (June 30, 2001).

As we move through this process, I will be sharing information with you on a regular basis through this column, all-staff e-mails, and my Intranet Web site (http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/secretary_s_corner/secretary_s_corner.htm).

Again, thank you for the important work you do.

Lyle Quasim

Dear Assistant Secretary Rosie Oreskovich,

Having been asked by several people, I am taking the time to let you know of the successes of one of my foster children and all the help I received from Betsey Page, his social worker (in the Tacoma Division of Children and Family Services office).

I have served children as a foster parent for over 17 years and have never worked with such a dedicated, supportive person as Betsy Page. My hat goes off to her.

While in the process of foster parenting my son, Myron Hase*, I must thank Betsy for always listening. Thank her for not letting me give up when it seemed to me that it was all that was left. Thank her for keeping all things in proper perspective, for being the balance. Thank her for always making the finances available to keep things going. For just being there alongside of me and sometimes way ahead of me to see me through.

It was very encouraging to me to have worked with a case worker that gives so much while doing her job. There are not flowers and cards enough to convey my deepest gratitude.

If you should one day see Barbara Oakeson, please share with her the successes. It was her initial placement of Myron in my home...that set this chain of events in motion.

I ... refer to this child as "My one of a kind." He is the

overachieving type that does everything with great success. He has been in 13 community theater plays (starring in several), acted in educational videos, sang in three choirs a year at school, played football with gusto, wrestled with the best, and then danced his way to a full ride college scholarship in less than two years.

Taking dance classes at Dance Theatre Northwest in University Place, all on scholarship, gave him lots of chances to perform for the public. He has sang and danced at the Tacoma Dome, the Seattle Center, the Temple Theatre and about 30 other locations around the Northwest.

Last Spring he won gold medals with each of his two numbers in the Access Broadway competition in downtown Seattle.

He decided long ago he would not graduate in the year 2000. He condensed four years of high school into three, there was so much dedication. He set new precedent by using his after-school performing arts to receive elective credits thus allowing him to accumulate the required numbers. Graduation in three years was exciting, but graduating in three years with Honors was excitement beyond excitement.

Myron auditioned at Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle last February, competing for the opportunity to study at the American Ballet Theatre's summer intensive workshop in Detroit. He

was competing with many other talented hopefuls from the greater Seattle area as well as (those at) other auditions held across the United States. ...When the offer of a full scholarship came, it was a dream opportunity. The training was given by the biggest names in the world of dance in the United States. His final performances were held in the famed Michigan Opera House.

Now Myron has started down the road of higher education with his acceptance into Barat College, Lake Forest, Illinois. To date he has received \$17,000 a year in renewable scholarships. I still have to pinch myself to see if it can really be happening....He has moved out of my home and on to the next step in his pursuit to become a professional dancer.

I know that I am so very proud of all that this child has accomplished and that Myron will continue to make all of us proud to have been a part of his life. The part of his life that turned him around.

One day you will be seeing his name on the largest of Broadway marquees. Won't that be the best Thank You of all?

I continue to foster children because of the successes.

Sincerely,
Maureen P. Morlang,
Pierce County

(Editor's note: Myron is now over 18 and has generously permitted use of his name.)

More words about our work ...

Dear Secretary Lyle Quasim

I just wanted to write and compliment you on the (Community Services Division's) Constituent Relations office. Here at Catholic Community Services I was assigned a complex case involving a disabled man, the Department of Labor and Industries, and DSHS.

Without the compassionate intervention and knowledgeable assistance of Iris Green and Heidi Burkhardt, this young man would have found himself homeless. In less than 48 hours, these two women were able to locate and correct the error in his paperwork, which had prevented him from receiving assistance for the last several months.

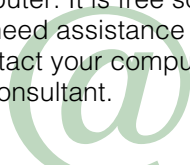
For many years I have been vocal about various agencies that do not fulfill their responsibilities. Conversely, I also believe we have an obligation to promote and support programs and people who do work well and Constituent Relations is a perfect example of an agency working at its very best.

Again, please accept my gratitude for all the help and I know that my client is now in a position to get the care he needs so he can move forward with his life.

Sincerely,
Kate Austin, M.A., Counselor
Catholic Community Services
South King County Family Center

The News Connection is online

The News Connection is available on the DSHS Internet and Intranet home pages. The Internet address is: <http://www.wa.gov/dshs> The Intranet address is: <http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/> The newsletter is available in both PDF and text only formats. In order to view the newsletter, which is a PDF (portable document format) file, you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. It is free software. If you need assistance with this, contact your computer information consultant.



Sharing our successes and commitment to reaching beyond the expected to the excellent

Quality IN DSHS

e-government: Working smarter

It's a well-known story — Funding sources tighten, client needs grow, and taxpayers press for more government efficiencies. DSHS has been living this story for years. With each fresh belt-tightening, we put our heads together and continue to find ways to improve our services for our clients. In recent years, we have added quality improvement methods to our tool kit, scouring for every conceivable way to increase efficiencies.

With passage of I-695, the stakes are even higher, the challenges greater. Major strategies are required, some of which are outlined in this issue of *The NewsConnection* in Secretary Lyle Quasim's letter to staff.

Making greater use of information technology to expedite business processes, known as "e-government," is one of these strategies. E-government can save significant time, money, and paper. More than this, information technology can help us collect and use information more efficiently and deliver services in a more coordinated way.

Many quality improvement projects have improved our business processes through the use of information technology. On these pages, you will read about some of these projects.

DIVISION OF FRAUD INVESTIGATION VIDEO CONFERENCING REDUCES FOOD STAMP FRAUD



Team members: (From left) Jan McClintock, Pat Park, Kathy Chapman, Carol Edwards, Dong Nguyen, Cyndi Schaeffer, and Desiree Kintner

The Alderwood Community Services Office (CSO) knew that some food stamp cases did not have accurate information due to inaccurate reporting by clients and

fraudulent information provided by clients.

They partnered with the Division of Fraud Investigation (DFI) to develop a process for video conferencing with the client, the financial service specialist, and with a DFI investigator to clarify questionable circumstances and/or questions reported by the client.

This project has resulted in more accurate issuance of food stamps and savings in staff time. Ninety percent of all cases reviewed were found to be ineligible for food stamps, saving the state nearly \$34,000 annually. It has benefited the client by helping to clarify the expectations and verification requirements. This results in helping clients avoid overpayments and delays in receiving benefits.

Results

- Program accuracy has improved: 40 cases were reviewed during the project and 90 percent resulted in termination, 23 cases resulted in clarification of circumstances.
- Savings in staff time of six hours per case that was terminated.
- Clients with difficulty in processing verbal or written information have an additional opportunity to provide accurate verification.
- Communication between all parties involved has improved.

Team members: Gail Brown, Des Kintner, Kathy Chapman, Dong Ngyuen, Cyndi Schaeffer, Pat Park, Carol Edwards, and Jan McClintock.

FILE TRANSFER SIMPLIFICATION SAVES TIME, SPEEDS SERVICE TO CLIENTS

The File Transfer Efficiency Team project developed a more effective way to exchange information between the Yakima Home and Community Services Office (HCS) and the local Area Agency on Aging (AAA), eliminating the need to ship bulky files.

When case files were originally transferred to AAA three years ago, there was no method of tracking records because AAA was not part of the DSHS bar code system. In order to know the location of files, the record had to be returned to HCS to change the bar code location.

The file may have gone from Yakima HCS to Yakima AAA and now needed to move on to Seattle AAA, but in order to track this move, the file had to be returned to Yakima HCS for bar coding. To improve this process, the project team tested a form that allowed the file information to be input into the bar code system without the file being returned to the HCS office. The file folder could then move directly from one AAA office to another without a return to HCS.

Results

- Records move rapidly from one AAA office to another allowing services to be opened in the new office faster, thereby better serving the client.
- \$306 saved per year. Postage costs for transporting records have been reduced.
- 90 staff hours saved per year. HCS clerical staff have saved 15 minutes per record transfer because they only have to deal with a disposable sheet of paper as opposed to a bulky file that had to be mailed to a second AAA location.
- This project is now viewed as an interim solution. In the near future, Yakima AAA will be getting their own DSHS bar code station. This probably will be a new, future CQI project in Region 2.

Team members: AASA: Aileen Kulik, Anna Rodriguez and Jess Ygon. AAA: Merletta Roberts.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (CMIS) IMPROVES MANAGEMENT OF CLIENT CALLS

Medical Assistance Administration was receiving client calls on the toll-free lines at a volume as high as 30,000-40,000 calls per month. Details of the calls and actions taken were either not recorded or they were taken by hand on paper. Enrollments and other services were often duplicated since there was no efficient way to track previous work. The toll-free staff were often working without background information when a client called a second or third time.

Staff wanted to be more consistent in their responses to clients and avoid giving conflicting answers or information. They also wanted to reduce the time spent processing paper, which was identified as a barrier to actually providing direct service to customers.



Team members: (From left) Merletta Roberts (ALTC), Anna Rodriguez, and Jess Ygon (HCS). Not pictured: Aileen Kulik



Team members: (From left) Valerie Pollet, Mark Benya, Karen Nesse, Nancy Moricert-Burling. Front row: Pat White and Dan Lehuta.

(Continued on page 4)

e-government: Working smarter

In order to manage the growing call volume and address staff needs, a system (CMIS) was designed. This system now assists MAA staff in responding to calls while on the line without having to track down the previous responder. This system also creates a reporting system to track customers’ requests, reasons for calls, complaints, and trends in access to service.

Along with the new CMIS system, a new provider database was included to verify that when a customer chose a medical plan their preferred provider would be available.

Results

- Improved client access to the toll-free lines.
- Reduced the average call wait time from 14 minutes to five minutes.
- Increased staff time to initiate outreach activities and other process improvements.
- Increased the toll-free hours from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. to 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Reduced busy signals from 25 percent of the time to less than two percent.

Team members: Andre Balzer, Mark Benya, Judy Bergeron, Lilliam Calderon, Dan Lehuta, Nancy Morkert, Valerie Pollet, Kathy Rumsey, Pat White, and Karen Wilson.

TITLE XIX (MEDICAID) CLAIM IMPROVEMENT

Processing the Title XIX claim, which accounts for more than \$1.8 billion in federal funds, has historically been extremely complex and time consuming. The department had been unable to use information from the Cost Allocation System, extensive amounts of overtime were required, there was difficulty in meeting the federal deadline, and much work was required to reconcile the data.



Team members: (From left) Bridgett Butchers and Steve Lin. Not pictured: Marilyn McFarland

The Office of Accounting Services (OAS) and the Information Technology Office (ITO) decided to develop an automated solution.

The Title XIX Automation Team developed the detailed framework and system design and worked closely with contracted programmers to create the Automated Title XIX Claim System. The team diligently worked to create this system with limited resources, limited time frame, and effective coordination with others in the department to ensure impacts on stakeholders were minimized.

Results

- Improved accuracy of Title XIX claim.
- Simplified overall claim process.
- Save 320 FTE hours annually, freeing staff to concentrate on other program issues.
- Simplified agency accounting methods.

Team members: Bridgette Butcher, Steve Lin, and Marilyn McFarland.

OFFICE EFFICIENCIES IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Region 2 Home and Community Services Offices HCS staff had two different problems that were both solved with the same project. The first problems developed as the result of remodeling the Yakima HCS office. During the remodeling the reception desk (and sign-out board) were moved to a new area in our expanded office. Because staff did not routinely go into that area, they began to forget to sign out. Reception-

ists began to have problems directing telephone calls and clients coming into the office.

The second problem dealt with time wasted making telephone calls to staff in other Region 2 HCS offices when the staff in the second office were not available. When this occurred, the person making the telephone call would leave a voice mail message and/or call back later. Frequent protracted games of “telephone tag” resulted from this system.

To solve both of these problems, this project tested a computerized sign-out board that is activated when any Region 2 HCS employee turns his/her computer on or off. The receptionists checks the electronic sign out board to direct calls and clients. Staff do not need to take time to sign in and out. In addition, if staff need to contact someone in another office, they check the electronic sign-out board first, and save time by calling when the other staff person is at their desk.

Results

- Saved 360 staff hours per year by eliminating time-consuming sign-in and out procedures.
- Saved \$360 per year by eliminating 100 needless scan calls to other offices per month.
- Saved 60 annual staff hours per year by eliminating 300 minutes of wasted telephone time per month.
- Improved reception of incoming client calls and visits to the office.

Team members: Chuck Johnson, Jess Ygona and Anna Rodrigues

AUTOMATED INTAKE SYSTEM HELPS HCS TRACK CLIENTS

Often there are multiple contacts with a Home and Community Services (HCS) office on behalf of a client before an actual request for service is made.

A social worker or nurse can be assigned during this “intake” process long before specific services are requested. However, the Barcode system tracks clients only after a case file is created, and a case file is not created until the client actually requests services.

Prior to the Service Request Improvement Team project, the Pasco HCS staff were spending a lot of time trying to identify which social



Team members: (From left) Gregg Hess, Sharon Anderson, Karan Lindberg (all HCS).

worker or nurse had been working with the client or client’s representative during the intake process. The lack of tracking system from the moment of first contact caused a bottleneck at the receptionist’s desk, lengthy searches for information, and problems distributing workload equitably.

This team designed and tested a computerized intake system where the social worker, nurse,

or clerical support person enters the initial referral information into a database during the very first contact. With the new computerized intake system, all HCS staff can immediately access client data and staff assignments.

Results

- A time savings of 15 minutes per intake (146 hours annually) because staff can access information efficiently.
- The public receives faster service because inquiries can be immediately directed to the assigned social worker or nurse.
- Supervisors can distribute workload more equitably by comparing caseloads at a glance on a computer print-out.

Team members: Sharon Anderson, Greg Hess, and Karan Lindberg.



Sharing our successes and commitment to reaching beyond the expected to the excellent

Each of the eight administrations has steering committees to assist in leading the department's efforts to continue providing quality services to the residents of the state of Washington. For more information on the quality improvement activities occurring throughout the department, contact Cheryl Stephani, internal quality consultant, at (360) 902-7783 or e-mail at stephcs@dshs.wa.gov or Solomon Uwadiale, executive management consultant, at (360) 902-7649 or e-mail uwadism@dshs.wa.gov. Please visit the DSHS Intranet Quality Improvement site at intra.dshs.wa.gov/news.htm for ongoing updates of plans, successes, and accomplishments.

Secretary Quasim sends letter to all staff on Governor’s request

Secretary Lyle Quasim sent the following letters via e-mail to all DSHS staff. We are also printing them in The NewsConnections to ensure everyone in the department has an opportunity to read his messages. These letters can also be found on the Office of the Secretary Intranet Web site at http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/secretary_s_corner/secretary_s_corner.htm

Nov. 24, 1999

SUBJECT:
Yesterday's announcement by Governor Locke on FTE reductions

As you have probably heard from the media by now, Governor Locke has directed all executive agencies to:

- reduce state employment by at least 1,500 full-time positions (from **all** state agencies combined) by the end of the current biennium primarily through attrition, targeted early retirement, and management efficiencies;
- reassign existing staff to higher priority activities;
- carefully scrutinize new hiring and staffing decisions;
- expand employee incentive programs for quality customer service;
- better control expenditures on travel, equipment, and leasing costs;

- identify and eliminate fraud in government; and
- expand on-line government services to provide easier access for the public.

The purpose of this memo is to let all DSHS employees know what we in DSHS are doing to address the Governor's directive and the potential that some FTE reductions may occur in DSHS. But first, I want to commend you for the extraordinary work you do every day to help the people of Washington state achieve safe, self-sufficient, healthy, and secure lives. There is no doubt that your efforts make a significant difference in the lives of the 1.3 million people DSHS serves every year.

Over the past year we have intensified our efforts to live within our budget and manage the increasing costs of meeting our clients' needs. I believe your creative and strategic thinking in this pro-

cess will pay off and enable the department to stretch increasingly scarce resources.

DSHS employees have always done an outstanding job of providing important services to the state's needy residents. We are also the leader of state agencies in continuously improving the quality of our services. That we have realized approximately \$30 million in cost savings from the quality improvement initiative attests to your commitment to use public funds wisely. Now, over the weeks and months ahead, we must become even more efficient. We will continue to search for ways to use automation to help us do our work more quickly and accurately. We will redouble our efforts to identify and eliminate fraud – in fact, the department is now working on a special project to deal with this concern. And, of course, we will also continue to manage our travel expenses, equipment and leasing costs, and carefully consider our hiring decisions.

As dedicated state employees you are very familiar with the impacts of Initiative 601 and now Initiative 695 upon government budgets. It is because of these budget realities that the Governor has

asked all agencies to reduce the workforce. The Office of Financial Management is working on a package of tools, some of which may need legislative support, to assist managers and employees affected by FTE reductions. These tools may include strategies such as early retirement, relocation assistance, and incentives for voluntary separation from state service. Using these tools, we will attempt to meet the FTE reductions necessary through early retirement, attrition, delays in filling some vacancies, reducing some temporary staff, and voluntary demotions or transfers to other positions.

We hope that our collective ongoing management efforts will be sufficient to realize these FTE reductions. We will keep all DSHS employees informed and involved as plans develop.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for the important work you do. Your commitment to the people of Washington State who rely upon DSHS services does not go unnoticed.

December 16, 1999

SUBJECT:
News on Streamlining Actions

On Nov. 24, I sent you a memo about the Governor's directives for streamlining state government. Since that time, we have made our initial streamlining decisions for the Department of Social and Health Services, and the results are reflected in the Governor's supplemental budget. The Governor is releasing his budget today, so I want to update you on our strategies.

As you may remember from my previous memo, passage of I-601 and I-695 has significantly restricted funds available for state services. However, even if those initiatives had not passed, resources have not kept up with the ever-increasing numbers of Washington residents, many of whom have increasingly complex needs. Strengthening our capacity to serve our clients is *the right thing to do*.

We have chosen these three actions to respond to the Governor:

1. Aggressively expand existing efforts to find, eliminate, and prevent **fraud**.
We are contracting for high-tech data analysis programs so we can do an even better job

spotting potential and actual contractor fraud. We expect to achieve a significant dollar recovery, and to identify ways to improve our business processes.

2. Vigorously expand the use of information technology ("**e-government**").

We will take advantage of information technology to make our business processes more efficient and cost effective, as well as to improve client access to services. E-Government will also help us gather and use information more efficiently.

3. **Consolidate facilities and** reduce FTEs.

Governor Locke is reducing 1,500 state positions by the end of this biennium (June 30, 2001). The DSHS share of this reduction is 500 FTEs. Consolidation and staff reductions always involve hard decisions, and we are going to be direct and straightforward with you. We have thought long and hard about how to meet this requirement with minimum hurt to employees, clients, and the public. Our plan for the next 18 months includes the following:

- Implement existing plans to consolidate facilities and staff in Juvenile Rehabilitation Adminis-

tration and the Division of Developmental Disabilities. This reduction will reduce staff by 170, and should occur mainly between April 2000 and June 2001.

- Implement a reduction of temporary staff in Economic Services Administration in June 2000, reducing staff by 110 FTEs.

- Accomplish the remaining 220 FTE reduction. We hope to do this primarily through attrition and a voluntary separation and downshifting program. When the Office of Financial Management approves the DSHS voluntary separation and downshifting program, we will send you complete information on possible options.

One of our core values at DSHS is to communicate honestly and regularly with staff. I anticipate that some strategies may be modified, and we will notify you of any changes through memos and articles in *The NewsConnection*. We will also be providing regular updates on the DSHS Intranet Web site, beginning in January 2000. Please check it out.

You are the first to know that we are working in a very challenging environment. As the leader of DSHS, I can't change this fact, but I can be as proactive as possible. We will meet this latest challenge with brainpower and compassion.

Check for periodic updates on the Office of the Secretary Intranet Web site at http://intra.dshs.wa.gov/secretary_s_corner/secretary_s_corner.htm

Diversity Calendar

Throughout the year *The News Connection* features special dates, provided by the Division of Access and Equal Opportunity. If you have a date you would like included in the calendar contact Patte King at KingPI@dshs.wa.gov. Not all dates can be included because of length constraints.

JANUARY

1	New Year's Day
4	Isaac Newton's Birthday
5	George Washington Carver's Birthday
8	Ramadan ends
9-11	Eid' Al Fitr Islamic Holidays
13	Togo Liberation Day
15	Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
17	Benjamin Franklin's Birthday
	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Observed)
20	Brazil: San Sebastian's Day
26	New Zealand: Auckland Day
28	Jose Marti's Birthday
30	Jackie Robinson's Birthday
31	13th Amendment abolishes slavery

FEBRUARY

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

5	Lunar New Year
11	Nelson Mandela Day
12	Lincoln's Birthday
14	St. Valentine's Day
15	Susan B. Anthony Day
18	Chief Leschi Day
19	Day of Remembrance: Japanese American Internment Day
21	Washington's Birthday (Observed)
27	Dominican Republic Independence Day